

THE EUROPEAN MEETING OF YOUNG ADULTS IN POLAND

Taking the time to be together

"For several weeks now," write those who are preparing the European meeting in Wrocław, "meetings have been multiplying in the parishes. A preliminary series of ten information meetings took place in each sector, then preparation groups began to meet locally. These teams are varied in size, but the same enthusiasm can be found everywhere. It is not rare to find people who participated in the previous European meeting in 1989 and who are allowing others to benefit from their experience." Each parish is preparing according to its own rhythm, adapting to its own context.

Here are some examples:
In our parish in the centre of town, the population is on the whole rather elderly; there is no organized youth group. Some young people made a pilgrimage to Taizé this summer, and several have taken part in European meetings in previous years. Now we are discovering that it is possible for us to pray together each week, to welcome newcomers and to organize the welcome for the end of the year. We do not forget two places of suffering nearby: a prison and a mental hospital. It's true that we need to be stimulated to go towards others, and the meeting is a good opportunity for this."

In another district where there are more young people, the priests invited those who came from Taizé to speak in the schools. In this way the small preparation group grew in size and young people were able to discover that they could take on responsibilities. By seeing the meeting above all as a common celebration, they have realized that even the preparation and the work that it entails is

a positive opportunity that should be offered to others. So some are making an effort to go and meet others, contacting other groups in the area; they are getting to know the families in their own neighbourhood.

One point is coming up everywhere: the positive memories of the welcome six years ago and the generosity of the families. Some families, who had wanted to offer hospitality but had not received anyone, have asked to be at the top of the list this time! Information circulates quickly, in part because of the announcements made in the parishes. It often happens that someone is invited to speak at seven or eight Sunday Masses. And in a parish close to one of the places where the prayer was held, the large *Hala Ludowa*, on just one Sunday already 400 places were found. It is not rare for families still to be in contact with those they welcomed six years ago, and their stories convince others who are still uncertain that communication problems or the lack of material comforts may not prevent them from having a beautiful experience of communion.

"When we think about the welcome, we see the consequences for our parish. It would be important to get to know one another better, to allow a common awareness as a parish community to grow. All that many people see of the parish is the Sunday Mass, and sometimes there are as many as ten in the course of the day! How can things not remain so anonymous? We see that this effort of openness must come from each one of us and that we have to change our tendency to remain in our own closed

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As in 1989, numerous families in Wrocław are preparing to welcome young people from all over Europe.

Six years ago: tens of thousands of young people from Eastern and Western Europe travelled freely to the first European meeting in Poland.

world. By making an effort to visit families, new relationships can spring up, and more dialogue. In the past, the Church had to affirm its presence in an atheistic State, and so we built huge churches to bear witness to the strength of our faith and the commitment of each person. Now this opposition no longer exists; priests teach catechism in schools, but many people are under the sway of the consumer society and everything is more uncertain. The rhythm of life has changed and it is difficult to find time to be together. In order not to let ourselves be carried away by the practical tasks of organization, we begin each meeting with a beautiful time of prayer, and we have divided up the practical jobs among ourselves."

Prayer is supporting the preparation of the meeting. Each day at noon, the brothers who are present in Wrocław lead a prayer in a small church in the centre of town. In many parishes, there are regular prayers open to all.

More than five thousand young people from the region of Wrocław set out, on Saturday October 15th, on a pilgrimage to Trzebnica, to visit the tomb of Saint Hedwig, the patron saint of the region. Beginning at six o'clock in the morning, the eighteen groups came together to pray in the cathedral, then they began the thirty-kilometre journey on foot. Young and old walked together, even including some children; there were times of prayer, of singing, of celebration. The pilgrimage began in the city, then the participants crossed fields, forests and villages in organized groups, one after another. The local people greeted them from their windows or standing in front of their homes, taking part in that way in the joy of the pilgrimage.

This concrete experience of pilgrimage, so deeply rooted in the tradition of the Polish Church, was like a foreshadowing of the pilgrimage of trust. Is it not by walking forward together that we become able to go beyond barriers, to learn to trust, to encourage one another to create something new?

Taizé
European Meeting
of Young Adults
28 December 1995
- 1 January 1996
Wrocław



An Ongoing Pilgrimage

During the weeks of meetings in Taizé, the question of "what happens afterwards" comes up many times.

After a stay in Taizé, people are invited to continue their searching in their daily lives, without the support of an organized structure, by being open to local groups and communities that already exist as well as to people who may be isolated. The image of an ongoing pilgrimage expresses well the inner and outer steps that need to be taken.

Pilgrims set out on the road in the trust that the Christ they are following is present among those they will meet. They learn to discover in these people reflections of Christ's presence. By daring to go towards others, by learning how to let themselves be welcomed, they allow a communion to be created.

How can we go towards others when we feel fragile ourselves? Here are two answers to this question:

"The important thing is letting ourselves be touched by the presence of the Holy Spirit who awakens sleeping hearts, who breaks down walls of incom-

prehension, who renews the will and transforms hidebound attitudes. The Spirit opens a road of communion and openness, gathering together the scattered pieces of the person and giving meaning to the whole. The invisible becomes visible. Confidence in an unknown future becomes possible. The call to take risks and to create new realities provides new enthusiasm... In my situation, I am discovering how to keep on saying 'yes' to that call. I can choose again and again to be a creator with God, even if the desert of the large city fosters fear and discouragement. I am learning how to accept the presence of God in all simplicity, despite the inertia of my limits."

"There are times when I need to get away, to leave behind everyday life, to find myself once again. But finding oneself also means discovering inner contradictions and limits. Friends of mine who travelled in poor countries told me how abrasive it is to discover great poverty,

how it wears you out physically, because it reflects back to you as in a mirror your own inner poverty. When I am in Taizé I can run the risk of finding who I am, because I know that other people and God look at me with trust. But what can I do about my limits? Should I try to extend them as far as possible, as my education has taught me? Or can I learn to live with these limits, which doesn't mean comfortably settling down in mediocrity? For me, daring to go further on this road means accepting both my weakness and the call of faith: 'By faith, Moses left Egypt without fear: he remained faithful, as if he already saw the invisible' (Hebrews 11,27)."

During the times of sharing in Taizé, many examples of how to continue afterwards emerge. It is not possible to offer a synthesis, but here are some ideas that can make us think:

During their stay in Taizé, a small group from a business school in Paris spoke of some commitments of solidarity:

Here are some samples of what can be found in our business school. First of all, we are quite aware of the problem of unemployment; that is why two different programmes have been set up to deal with this problem.

"Access" is a somewhat "technical" association that helps the unemployed to develop a project of their own: a market study, a legal association or a committee to develop one's own business, etc. This year, the students in charge tried to develop a national network for this association so that students from other schools could help people in different regions who are out of work.

"175-3:" this idea was launched last October. A young man of our age who was out of work was given assistance in finding his first job. It is above all moral support, but also technical assistance: how to write a resume, prepare for an interview, make applications, etc. The originality of this project was to enlist the help of alumni of the school. In this way small groups of three were formed, each made up of an alumnus, a student and an unemployed person. The experience and the connections of the alumni were very useful.

Other associations, perhaps more conventional, are also interesting:

"Genepi:" students go to meet with prisoners and give them individual or group lessons, or help them to write their letters.

"Asphalt Flower," in close contact with the Student Social Services, tries to help the most unfortunate through a variety of different activities: helping children with their schoolwork—doing their

homework with them and reviewing their lessons.

Operation "Habitat": restoring old apartments for elderly or destitute persons. This project occupies five or six students for a weekend—painting, wallpapering, etc. and spending time with those they are helping.

Operation "Breadbasket": going to find the homeless where they stay, especially in railway stations. On Tuesday evening, some bakers donate their surplus bread and pastries; the students bring coffee and, in groups of two or three, use the pretext of a shared cake to speak with the homeless; collecting food and clothing, distributing meals with soup kitchens or the Salvation Army.

After the European meeting in Paris, there were many occasions to share initiatives undertaken in the parishes. Here are some of them:

Passing an icon from family to family and suggesting that they hold a prayer with friends and neighbours.

Organizing a prayer service each month in a different church, so as to keep a sense of openness among different communities in the same area.

Taking part in worship services in other languages: Portuguese, Spanish, Vietnamese...

A night of prayer, led in turn by different groups.

A night "pilgrimage", going on foot to places close by that need to be rediscovered.

Visiting places of suffering and hope, people committed in different local realities.

Offering a welcome to parishioners before or after the service: coffee hours, potluck suppers...

A parish festival where all the different groups share with others what they do.



Listening to the Continents

Sweden

Meeting of Young Adults in Lund

Last year, when the fourteen Lutheran bishops of the Church of Sweden came to Taizé, the bishop of Lund asked the brothers to organize a meeting of young adults in his city in September of this year.

Young people came to this meeting from all parts of Sweden as well as from Denmark and Norway. Most of the gathering took place in the old Romanesque cathedral, which was built about the year 1150. All the pews were removed from the central nave and one of the side naves, and this gave the cathedral a completely different look. Small candles and some illuminated icons were placed on the fifteen steps that led up to the sanctuary. People entering the church for the prayers were visibly struck to see the space so transformed.

On Saturday morning, the cathedral also served as a place of meeting. After a

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O Christ, you are united to every human being without exception. Still more, risen from the dead, you come to heal the secret wound of the soul. And for each of us there open the gates of an infinite goodness of heart. Through such love, little by little our lives are changed.

Prayer by Brother Roger

Familiar to many different cultures, the symbol of the tree of life already appears in the first pages of the Bible, in the story of the garden of Eden (Gen 2-3). Unfortunately what people tend to remember of that story is only the theme of the forbidden fruit: Adam and Eve eat it and, because of their transgression, the golden age of the beginning gives way to our present predicament. But this framework (*golden age* — *sin* — *present misery*) is not specifically biblical; on the contrary, the

in the middle of the garden (Gen 2,8-9). The importance of trees in the description of the garden can be explained by the place of origin of the story; it comes from a warm country, with deserts nearby. Without shade, life would be impossible there. Trees are signs of the presence of water and the site of oases. They are signs of life. At the centre of God's garden, one tree is this in a particular way, the "tree of life." It bears this name because its fruit is life, just as an orange tree bears oranges and an apple tree, apples. It is

with the poignant image of the "road to the tree of life" forbidden and closed off (Gen 3,24). Could the promise of life inscribed in creation be deceptive? Is happiness inaccessible to us? The birth and the existence of Jesus reassures us about the fundamental goodness of creation. The one who gives life to the world is also the fruit of our earth. In him, creation has once again become a source of life. Christ came from God but, through his mother Mary, he is a creature. He would not have become what he is without all that

The Tree of Life

human tendency to see the past with rose-tinted glasses in order to complain about the present is universal. Far from approving it, biblical wisdom sometimes even makes fun of it: "Don't say, 'Why were the old days better than the present?' It is not wisdom that makes you ask such questions" (Eccl 7,10).

What the Book of Genesis describes as a *before* and an *after* can also be understood as two different ways of looking at life. Gen 3 describes the difficulties that all human beings confront: the pain of childbirth, conflicts between people, hard and unrewarding work ("You will earn your bread by the sweat of your brow") and death on the far horizon (Gen 3,16-19). But life is not only made up of misery. If we open our eyes, under this hard crust of existence we can see something else, a fundamental goodness. And that is what Gen 2 describes as a *before*: the beauty of creation, the joy of living. The garden of Eden is the whole earth as God meant it to be in order to welcome us. It is so beautiful in order that, by living here as his guests, we might become accustomed to remaining with him forever.

"The Lord God planted a garden in the East, in Eden, and placed there the man (Adam) he had formed. The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow from the ground—trees pleasant to look at and good to eat—with the tree of life

found "in the centre," in this way summing up the whole garden. The tree of life is a symbol of the world. In other words, all of creation is made to be a source of life: "the creatures of the world are wholesome, and there is no destructive poison in them" (Wis 1,14).

Human beings are not just passively present within creation. They take care of the garden God has planted: "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to cultivate it and take care of it" (Gen 2,15). They have to take care of the jewel of the garden, the tree of life, in a special way. This mention of the work of human beings in paradise is a call to discern in human activity, even when it is tiresome and sometimes ambiguous, a basic dignity: the possibility of corresponding to God's creative activity and to create life together with him. For example, the earth cannot nourish humanity without the work of those who till the soil. Medicinal plants and chemicals could not cure without the intelligence of those who turn them into medicines. Wisdom, so necessary to those who have responsibilities, is itself called a "tree of life" (Prov 3,18). And more than anything else, love is a source of life and meaning. Liberated from their solitude, human beings set to work with joy (Gen 2,18-24).

But the story of the garden concludes

our world gave him, from food to the love of his mother, and without the life of prayer he inherited from his people Israel.

Risen from the dead, he said, "To the victor (in other words to the one who believes faithfully) I will give to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God" (Rev 2,7). Christ himself is the tree of life, and these words refer to the Eucharist, as is confirmed by the nearby passage referring to "hidden manna" (Rev 2,17). To give us eternal life, he took a human body made of the dust of our earth (Gen 3,19). And as a "medicine of immortality" for us, he chose the bread and wine produced by the earth. "For him," wrote Saint Maximus Confessor (seventh century), "our earth was no different from paradise." The last book of the Bible concludes with the vision of "a new heaven and a new earth." Through the life, death and resurrection of Christ, the earth has become identical to paradise. A whole orchard of trees of life grows: "Down the middle of the great street of the city, on each side of the river, stood trees of life bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding their fruit every month. And their leaves are for the healing of the nations" (Rev 22,2). The symbol of the tree of life is found in the last pages of Scripture just as in the first. It tells us that we have been made for life, life on our earth and life in God's eternity.

MEDITATING ON THE WORD ANUARY

These short readings proposed for reflection are taken from the midday prayer in Taizé. The reference shows where the text was taken from. Sometimes a longer reading is given, for those who wish to set the text in its context.

JOHANNINE HOURS

JOHN 17.20-21

1 Mon Jesus said: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

Lk 6:27-35

2 Tue This is what we have heard from Christ: God is light, in him there is no darkness at all.

1 Jn 1:1-7

3 Wed God is faithful and has called you to live in communion with his Son, Jesus Christ.

1 Co 1:4-9

4 Thu Moses told the people: God set his heart on you and chose you, not because you are more numerous than other peoples, but it was out of love for you that the Lord delivered you from the land of slavery.

Dt 7:7-8

5 Fri Live your lives in Christ Jesus. Be rooted and built up in him, strengthened by the faith you have been taught and overflowing with thankfulness.

Col 2:6-13

6 Sat EPIPHANY In God's days justice will flourish, and peace in plenty until the end of time. For he rescues the needy who call to him, and the poor who have no one to help.

Ps 72

7 SUN When they saw the star, the wise men were filled with a great joy. As they entered, they saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they knelt down and worshipped him.

Mt 2:1-12

8 Mon John said: I baptise with water; but standing among you — unknown to you — is the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandal.

Jn 1:19-27

9 Tue Fathom me, God, and know my heart. Probe me, know my thoughts and guide me in the way that is everlasting.

Ps 139

10 Wed Peter writes: Cast all your anxiety on God because he cares for you.

1 P 5:6-11

11 Thu Jesus said: When you pray, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, as your Father in heaven forgives your sins.

Mk 11:22-25

12 Fri Moses told the people: What I command you today is not too difficult for you nor beyond your reach. The Word is very near you, it is on your lips and in your heart for you to put it into practice.

Dt 30:11-14

13 Sat Jesus saw a poor widow put two small coins into the temple treasury and, calling his disciples, he said, "In truth I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all the others, for they all gave out of their wealth, but she has put in everything she possessed."

Mk 12:41-44

14 SUN I waited, I waited for the Lord, and he heard my cry. He put a fresh song in my mouth: a hymn of praise to our God.

Ps 40

15 Mon Jesus said: Happy are the clear in heart, for they shall see God.

Mt 5:1-12

16 Tue St Paul writes: From now on those who buy something should live as if they did not possess and those who use the things of the world should do so without being engrossed in them. Because this world as we know it is passing away.

1 Co 7:29-31

17 Wed I stand at the door, knocking. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

Rv 3:20-22

18 Thu The Lord said to Samuel: Take no notice of his appearance. God does not see as human beings see: they look at the appearance but God looks at the heart.

1 S 16:1-13

19 Fri Jesus said: It is not the one who says to me, "Lord, Lord," who will enter the kingdom of heaven but the person who does the will of my Father.

Mt 7:21-27

20 Sat Seeing that many of his disciples were turning away, Jesus said to the Twelve, "What about you, do you want to go away too?" Peter answered, "Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words of eternal life."

Jn 6:67-69

21 SUN May there be no divisions among you. Be closely united in mind and thought.

1 Co 1:10-13

22 Mon Moses said to the people: The Lord our God is the only God. Love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength.

Dt 6:4-9

23 Tue The Lord says: I know your trials and your poverty, yet you are rich: do not fear suffering, stay faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life.

Rv 2:8-11

24 Wed This is love: not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son for the forgiveness of our sins.

1 Jn 4:7-11

25 Thu Jesus said to his disciples: Who is the greater: the one at table or the one who serves? The one at table, surely? Yet I am among you as one who serves.

Lk 22:24-27

26 Fri In a vision, Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord say, "Whom shall I send?" And he answered, "Here I am, send me."

Is 6:1-8

27 Sat God chose us in Christ, before the world was made, to be holy and faultless before him in love.

Ep 1:3-14

28 SUN Jesus' disciples came to him and he taught them saying: Happy are the poor in spirit, the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

Mt 5:1-12

29 Mon The Lord said of his people: They have forsaken me, the fount of living water, and have dug themselves cracked cisterns that will not hold water.

Jr 2:1-13

30 Tue Jesus said: Some think that by using many words in their prayer, they will make themselves heard. Do not be like them; your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Mt 6:7-15

31 Wed May God enlighten the eyes of your heart so that you may see the hope to which he calls you.

Ep 1:15-23

I pray not only for these, but for those also who through their words will believe in me. May they all be one. Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me. Jesus makes the development of faith depend on the unity of the disciples among themselves, of which the foundation and model are in his communion with the Father. This unity of Christ's friends, essential so "that the world may believe", is combined with their being sent out for the mission that Jesus confides to them: "Go out to the whole world, proclaim the Good News to all creation". (Mk 16.15)

Christians are invited to live this double fidelity: to being sent out and to unity, not as two poles which are antagonistic but which are deeply linked. Unity precedes and gives substance to the witness. Simultaneously this unity is called to grow larger, to become a reality, to be proclaimed within the context of a church that is expanding geographically — that embraces the diversity of cultures and of peoples and makes its way through history — it has to last from one generation to another, and the ages.

Thus, living from our faith, in the trusting in God, commits us to seeking first of all communion. Fraternal love becomes the first criteria which guides our search for truth, for service or for prayer. People who commit themselves to communion are accomplishing what is essential so that the world may believe, and to make accessible to others, and to make them discover the sources of trust. "The reality is the body of Christ". (Col 2.17)

This unity is not an inaccessible ideal that is finally discouraging. It already exists in the communion of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit. There is the source of our vocation and our momentum. Human beings are called to reproduce the likeness of the God who is Trinity by being different persons with the unity of one communion.

- Where is responsibility for unity confided to me?
- How to live this unity, this "holding together" which is necessary in sharing our faith with others, in a context where we are dispersed or have little availability?
- How can my personal witness link up with my commitment in the life of any local community?

MEDITATING ON THE WORD

FEBRUARY

These short readings proposed for reflection are taken from the midday prayer in Taizé. The reference shows where the text was taken from. Sometimes a longer reading is given, for those who wish to set the text in its context.

JOHANNINE HOURS

MATTHEW 13.18-23

Johannine hours are meant as a way seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 5 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

1 Thu Be openhanded towards your neighbour and towards the poor and needy in your land.

Dt 15:7-11

2 Fri PRESENTATION OF THE LORD When Simeon saw the child Jesus, he praised God and said: Now, Lord, you can let your servant depart in peace as you promised. For my eyes have seen the salvation you have prepared for all people to see.

Lk 2:22-38

3 Sat God said to Jeremiah: Go to everyone I send you to. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to protect you.

Jr 1:4-8

4 SUN If you do away with the accusing finger and malicious talk, if you give what is yours for the hungry, then your light will rise in the darkness and your darkest hour will be like the middle of the day.

Is 58:7-10

5 Mon Lord, you teach me the way of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy.

Ps 16

6 Tue Our hope will not let us down, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.

Rm 5:1-11

7 Wed Jesus said: The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Mt 20:24-28

8 Thu I am confident that the One who began a good work in you will go on completing it until the day Christ Jesus comes.

Ph 1:3-11

9 Fri Trust in God with all your heart and do not rely upon your own understanding.

Pr 3:3-6

10 Sat Paul writes: These three things remain: Faith, hope and love. And the greatest of them is love.

1 Co 13:8-13

11 SUN Jesus said: If you are bringing your offering to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother first, and then come back and present your offering.

Mt 5:17-37

12 Mon If you want to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for trials. Be sincere of heart and steadfast. Do not be alarmed by adversity, but attach yourself to the Lord and do not leave him.

Sl 2:1-11

13 Tue St. Paul writes: The kingdom of God is not a question of exterior rules, but justice and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Rm 14:13-19

14 Wed Jesus said: Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Mt 11:28-30

15 Thu John writes: We are confident that if we ask God for anything, and it is in accordance with his will, he will hear us.

1 Jn 5:14-15

16 Fri In my distress, I called to the Lord. He heard me and set me free.

Ps 118

17 Sat Jesus said to his first disciples, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of people." And at once they left their nets and followed him.

Mk 1:16-20

18 SUN Jesus said: Love your enemies and pray for those who mistreat you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.

Mt 5:38-48

19 Mon The Lord has destroyed the veil of mourning that enfolded all peoples. He has swallowed up death forever.

Is 25:6-9

20 Tue Praise be God who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

2 Co 1:3-7

21 Wed ASH WEDNESDAY Jesus said: When you give, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your generosity is secret. And your Father, who sees all that is done in secret, will reward you.

Mt 6:1-4

22 Thu This is what the Lord wants of you, only this: to act justly, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.

Mi 6:6-8

23 Fri Give yourselves to God and then sin will no longer have any power over you — you are not under law, but under grace.

Rm 6:12-14

24 Sat Jesus said: It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance.

Lk 5:29-32

25 SUN Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Ps 51

26 Mon Let us love, since God loved us first. Anyone who does not love the brother they see cannot love God whom they do not see.

1 Jn 4:12-21

27 Tue The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in time of trouble. Those who know your name trust in you, Lord. For you never forsake those who seek you.

Ps 9

28 Wed Jesus said to his disciples: You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, what can make it salty again?

Mt 5:13-16

29 Thu The Lord your God walks with you. He will never leave you or forsake you.

Dt 31:1-8

Hear the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom without understanding, the evil one comes and carries off what was sown in his heart: this is the man who receives the seed on the edge of the path...And the one who receives the seed in rich soil is the man who hears the word and understands it: he is the one who yields a harvest and produces now a hundredfold, now sixty, now thirty." (Mt 13.18-23)

More than a list of threats that weigh upon the disciples, this parable seeks to bring out the precious and super-abundant gift that the Word represents. It carries within itself a great creative dynamism: whatever the losses may be, the result is amply positive. The Word is well worth all our attention and all our care.

The Word is more vital than the values of the world: the criteria of reliability, security and success which, if they invade us with their voices in turn strident, anxious and imaginary, come to the point of covering over and discouraging the Word that invites and renders possible a communion.

The Word can deploy its action only to the extent of our response. From there comes our responsibility in welcoming it earnestly, ensuring that its roots are profound: in recollection, in gathering ourselves within. Listening to the Word yet again more deeply, letting it enlighten us and reveal the longing set within us...And discover there our longing of God.

The Word is Christ...To welcome the Word is to let Christ be free to live in me: to believe when I no longer expect anything, to forgive when I would like to draw back, to give myself when I have nothing left to bear the fruit in spite of the stones and the undergrowth in my life.

- This love enlarges my life a hundredfold and gives a meaning that is stronger than everything.
- What are the deep roots that make it possible to continue to welcome the Word?
- What helps us to gather ourselves together inwardly?
- How can we step back from what wears us down, discourages and disperses us, and how can we rediscover the essential priorities? How can we keep alive our creativity?

le introduction for everyone, it was prising to see the huge church filled h innumerable small groups in deep yersation.

On Saturday evening, the prayer med to go on and on without end. In e cathedral, illuminated by hundreds of y candles, the meditative singing con- ued until after midnight in an atmos- ere of peace and meditation. People me up to pray around the cross, which d been placed on low stools near the or. Together with the young people ere were elderly persons and children b. The absence of pews allowed handi- pped persons in wheelchairs to come to the cross with no difficulty.

Lund is a student town, and many of em are out late at night, especially on day and Saturday evenings. Some, re- ming from their evening out and notic- g the windows of the cathedral lit, me in to see what was going on. Those ho prepared the meeting were expect- g these inhabitual visits and a group of eople stayed to welcome those who en- red on Friday night until 2am, and on Saturday until 3am.

The day after the meeting, all the eople of Lund who had helped with the eparation met in one of the parishes of e town. The most striking thing that emerged from their discussion was the eappiness that several young people felt having taken part in a common cre- tion. Being given responsibilities and owing that the outcome of the meeting depended on them stimulated them to ve of themselves. Some of them, even ery young, worked hard. They did so illingly because they were happy to be volved in an event of the Church. Now ound and old are searching for ways of ontinuing to work together creatively in heir parishes.

Senegal

A Tiny Reflection of God's Heart

Since the beginning of 1993, a few Taizé brothers have been living together in Dakar, Senegal, at the archbishop's request. One of them writes:

Grand-Yoff, a working-class district of 150,000 inhabitants, is set at the heart of the metropolitan area formed by Dakar and its suburbs. It is not a homogenous ghetto where the poor live in isolation, but a place where people from many different backgrounds are found side by side and where it is easy for newcomers to enter. On the wide road of sand along which we were able to rent a house and which is used as a playground by the children as well as a place of business for many small artisans, horse-carts pass, as do taxis at the end of their career and brand-new Mercedes. The district is

bounded on one side by a major road where public transportation is not too bad.

The Muslim majority here seems particularly hospitable and tolerant. The Christians, more numerous than the national average, form a lively and confident community.

The house we found after much searching is welcoming and allows a certain intimacy. All the rooms open on to a courtyard which is the breathing-space of the house: a place of hospitality, of work, of prayer during the warmer season.

From the beginning, we felt the necessity of allowing young people from the neighbourhood to share our life so that we would not be a Keur Toubab (house of whites). These young people live with us for a limited time, joining in our work, our prayer and our welcome, while at the same time continuing their studies or professional activities.

Children are everywhere. They welcome us and follow us in the street; those who are Christians come and pray with us in the evening. Their life is full of games, dances, fights—a tireless commitment to life.

The rhythm of life in the house is created by the three times of prayer: morning, midday and evening. We have a fairly large prayer-space beautifully arranged with mats, icons and lots of candles. Some evenings there are as many as fifty people present, including children, a few young people and mothers.

A lot of singing takes place, but there is always a long space of silence that is well respected; the children are unbelievably quiet, so much so that at times they fall asleep in our laps. By their attitude of seriousness and faithfulness, they show us the way; they confirm us in the road we have taken. When a community is able to open its doors and welcome people from the outside, especially children, for prayer, it rediscovers its vocation to be a "little church".

Once a week, a celebration of the Eucharist presided by a priest from the neighbourhood gives us the opportunity to invite many Christians from the district and to give a festive character to what has become the high point of the week.

We have to earn our living. Fortunately, Dakar offers possibilities for translations and for architectural projects at the service of parishes and religious communities. We try to give priority to work that can be done at home, so that we do not become too dispersed. We want our house to be truly inhabited, a place that is alive and welcoming.

People knock on the door at all times: children who are thirsty or have hurt themselves; young people passing by who sit down for a moment, read a little, want to speak; neighbours who come to "see how things are going." And of course, all those who are looking for help...and there, the difficulty of living

with an open door makes itself felt. How can we welcome each person and help them without making them dependent? How can we manage to share some of what we have without turning ourselves into a social-aid service with people queued up at the door every morning? Undoubtedly by joining with others to set up simple structures that do the work better than we ourselves could.

We did not come to Senegal with solutions to the problems of the people and the country. Even less in order to start a movement or to undertake "a work of charity" on our own behalf.

Our way of doing things is by settling somewhere, living our community life while at the same time putting ourselves at the service of the local Church...and seeing what happens. And in fact many things do happen and lead us in directions we never planned to go in advance.

So now we find ourselves involved in pastoral work with the sick, with people with AIDS, in the welcome of refugees, with interparochial teams. We become part of undertakings that have already begun and sometimes, on account of the new outlook that new arrivals can have, we can stimulate new vitality or ensure a temporary coordination between parallel efforts.

We are also beginning to find ways of taking part in pastoral work with young people in some parishes.

For us, the important thing is to offer a face of the Church open to all, to give a small reflection of the heart of God.

Myanmar

Giving one's life

"And the humble trusting of faith is communicated like fire spreading from one person to the next." It is a common experience for people who make visits to other Christians, sometimes in far-off countries, sometimes close by, suddenly to find themselves confronted with realities that are close to the very heart of the Church. This was the case during a recent visit to Myanmar.

In Taunggyi, the home of the bishop is open to everyone, like a heart that gives life to the entire diocese. There is a constant stream of people who are there for a host of different reasons, health care, schooling and so on... The parishes are often far away and are without secondary schools and hospitals. So it is necessary to come into the city for everything. The state of the roads after the rainy season makes the journey difficult and it takes many hours to reach your destination. Right next to the bishop's house, there is a house where the village people can stay while they wait for an appointment to see a doctor or to go to the hospital for treatment. Further on is a house for around a



Listening to the Continents

hundred boys from six to eighteen years old. They are either orphans or else they have come to Taunggyi to study but do not have enough money to pay for a place in a hostel.

Supported by many lay people, catechists and others, the bishop and the priests set an example. Their life is given a hundred per cent. They keep nothing for themselves, they have no personal property.

Many young men and women feel called to serve in the Church. There is one group made up of around a hundred young people. They are called Zatzamans which means "sent on a mission of service". After three months of preparation, they commit themselves for two years. They are sent off to the most isolated villages where there are still no priests. There they help with the first stage of the children's education, preparing them for going to school, or else caring for them when they come home from school. Others work in dispensaries and similar activities. The village leaders are quick to understand how seriously the young people have been trained and how honest they are, that they are giving themselves freely and they expect nothing in return. It is through the example of their commitment that they communicate the realities of the Gospel.

Germany

**Welcoming
with great simplicity**

Jana, from a part of Germany close to Poland, explains how she sees the preparation of the meeting in Wrocław:

For our region of Lausitz, on the Polish border, it seems to me particularly important that we go to Wrocław. People

from different countries need to become better acquainted and in this way to go beyond the prejudices that can be so entrenched when you live side by side. Meeting together in Poland, at the heart of Europe, is a unique opportunity to be together with those from the East who are so far from us!

When we are together, despite all our differences, each person finds the freedom to grow in their relationship with God. In our church it's different: there are organized groups to which you have to belong to find your place. But if we learn to listen to one another, we discover how the different paths to God are an enrichment and a source of wonder. This is the only way that belonging to a Christian community can lead not to becoming closed but to being more open.

Thanks to the European meetings, I am understanding better that there are no preconditions for believing. Often I hear people say, "I can't believe; I'm not good enough for that. I should change so many things in my life and I'm not able to." But that is not the question: I can remain myself because God comes to where I am.

I also see the importance of living the time of preparation and the meeting in relationship to the daily life of my parish. It is above all the experience of simplicity that counts: discovering that very little is enough to make the Church a place of welcome. That is what I am longing for from Wrocław, a lived experience of welcome in great simplicity.

Hiroshima

**A small space
of communion**

"The crypt of the cathedral in Hiroshima was lit by many candles; it looked like a catacomb for the early Christians. And like the Christians of every generation, we too had gathered to pray for peace to come to the world as well as to our hearts, on this Peace Memorial Day, 5th August 1995, the fiftieth anniversary of the dropping of the atom bomb on the city.

I believe our pilgrimage to Hiroshima was very meaningful. What was happening in the city and in the churches that day was very good. People had come from all over Japan and from many countries overseas. Because of the concrete issues involved, nuclear weapons notably, there were many different opinions represented among the people present. Some were very political, some quite sentimental. Finally what was needed, I think, was a small space of communion and I believe our prayer provided that. All the differences were drawn together in the time of silence during the prayer. In the depths of our existences as human beings, what

we all long for is peace, both in our hearts and among the nations.

For me personally, Peace Memorial Day in Hiroshima had always been important. My uncle is one of the hibakusha, one of the victims who survived the blast. For many years, he never wished to speak about his experience until he finally realised that as one of the witnesses, he could communicate what he knew to the next generation so that the same tragic error would never be made again.

So there we were, from Tokyo, Gunma, Nagaoya and even from as far away as Bangladesh, gathered in the crypt of the cathedral on the invitation of the Bishop of Hiroshima. Several had come in advance to prepare and to visit the different churches in the city. Many had been planning this pilgrimage for months.

"Da Pacem Domine". The song is taken up by many voices. The prayer has begun. Peace. We think of all that has been happening in our country over recent months. Tsuneko, a little girl, is the first to bring the light of hope into the darkness as she lights the candles around the icons and the altar. Later it is she who reads Brother Roger's prayer. We read from the Gospel: "Happy are the peacemakers. They shall be called children of God". And we gather round the icon of the cross, laying down our own burdens and the burdens of all those who are suffering, near and far."

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